(b) if so, what action is being taken by Government to promote the export from India?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A number of steps have been taken to promote exports which include reduction in transaction cost through decentralisation and simplification of procedures and various other measures as enumerated in the Exim Policy. Steps have also been taken to promote exports through multilateral and bilateral initiatives, identification of thrust sectors and focus regions.

Protection of interests of Developing Countries at WTO Conference

1123. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have taken any initiative to protect the interest of developing countries in the WTO Conference at Seattle;

(b) if so, what are the steps taken and the details thereof;

(c) the initiative taken to create a national consensus on the trade and related issues pertaining to India; and

(d) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) Government have been highlighting the problems of the existing asymmetries and inequities in several of the WTO Agreements, and the non-realization of expected benefits from Agreements such as textiles and agriculture by the developing countries in general and India in particular. India has also effectively articulated the manner in which the special and differential treatment provisions of the WTO Agreements have remained virtually inoperative and how, even in areas where developing countries acquire competitiveness, anti-dumping or anti-subsithes investigations are initiated in increasing numbers by the developed countries to deny them market access.

India has also resolutely opposed moves to introduce linkages between labour and trade or any further widening of the environmental window under WTO agreements, as this may result in disguised protectionism^ affecting the market access of developing countries. In view of the onerous burden of their Uruguay Round obligations weighing heavily on developing countries like ours, we have also opposed the overloading of the WTO's agenda with new issues. India has expressed its concerns in the implementation of various WTO agreements through as many as 24 proposals placed in the General council of WTO in the preparatory process. To garner support for its own agenda at the Third Ministerial Conference of the WTO at Seattle, Government had held wide ranging consultations with groups of developing countries, like SAARC and the 17 countries comprising the G-15 Group. India also participated actively in the G-77 Ministerial Meeting held in Marrakesh (Morocco) in September 1999, which issued a message to the Third WTO Ministerial Conference reflecting the concerns of the developing countries.

India along with 11 other like minded developing countries had also given proposals in the General Council at Geneva in the preparatory process to the Third Ministerial Conference of WTO, listing out the "implementation issues" which must be settled at Seattle and also the list of implementation issues as should be settled within one year of the Seattle Conference.

(c) and (d) Government have taken steps to consult all stakeholders for creating a national consensus on our negotiating . trategy for the Third Ministerial Conference of the WTO held at Seattle, USA from 30th November to 3rd December 1999. As early as on 28.6.1999, all State Governments and Political Parties were requested to give their suggestions and feed back on various issues that were expected to come up for discussion at this Conference. Representatives of Apex Labour Unions were also consulted in this regard.

With a view to involving experts on an institutional basis in the consensus building process, an Advisory Committee on International Trade was set up in January 99 under the Chairmanship of the then Commerce Minister. A number of workshops/Seminars at National/

regional level were organized on WTO matters in association with the apex Chambers of Commerce and Industry to build up a national consensus on our approach to the Third Ministerial Conference of the WTO.

The Indian delegation to WTO had included for the first time, representatives of the apex Industry associations and some Hon'ble Membes of Parliament, including those from Opposition Parties.

Pending Patent Cases

1124. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that several patenting cases are pending;

(b) if so, the number of cases pending during the last three years; and

(c) what steps are being taken to clear the pending cases in the Patent Offices expeditiously?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) The number of cases pending are as below:

Year	Pending as at the end of March
1996-97	20619
1997-98	28027
1998-99	33276

(c) Government intends to prioritise the clearance of backlog of patent applications in a time bound manner.

Globalsation of Patent Offices

1125. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to initiate globalisation of our patent offices keeping in view the changing scenario of patenting abroad; and